

not in this bill, and the rule did not allow that and many other important areas to come for debate.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER), a member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

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Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Chairman, I want to make it clear at the beginning of my remarks that I strongly support our President. I think he is doing a great job. I strongly support the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER), our committee chairman. I think he has done a great job in a very difficult situation. But I rise to oppose this education bill, Goals 2001.

I remember as a kid, I heard President Nixon say we are all Keynesians now. Right now I kind of feel like what we are saying is we are all liberals now in education. The fact is, in this Goals 2001, this current bill, unlike Goals 2000 where we were supposed to have the States evolve towards a national plan, we have a national plan.

Unlike the spending in education under former President Clinton, this bill spends more. Unlike the education bills under President Clinton where there was a proposal to just develop and look at a national test, this has national testing; and it has it for 6 years in a row, mandated by a backup of the Federal Government that, if one's State test does not meet the national standards, one can have one's money jerked.

Furthermore, it will lead to, in my belief, a national curriculum. There are more new programs in this bill than there were under President Clinton. At some point, one says when is it a bipartisan bill and when is it just taking two-thirds or more of what the Democrats had proposed in the past?

Now, there are some amendments here that could change the bill. The amendment of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA) would wipe out the testing and put us back to where we were under President Clinton. The amendment of the gentleman from California (Mr. COX) would have the spending be only a little bit more than under President Clinton. The bill of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) would take us back to where we were as Republicans last year on school choice. The bill of the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. DEMINT) would take us, not quite back to where we were last year, but at least to the Kennedy position in the Senate.

I know there are not going to be very many conservatives who are going to stand up under the pressures that we are under, and against the polls, and oppose this bill. I do not know whether there will be five of us, whether there will be 10 of us, or whether there are 20 of us; but there are some of us who are going to say that there are still Republicans who are conservative on the education issue, as on other issues.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND).

(Mr. KIND asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIND. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Michigan for yielding me this time.

Mr. Chairman, as a member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, I rise in strong support of the underlying core bill, H.R. 1, the Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act.

Let me be clear though, we have a lot of good schools, a lot of good school districts, a lot of good students doing incredibly well in the public education system throughout our country. I am particularly proud of the education system we have in the State of Wisconsin and my district that I represent in western Wisconsin. But there are also a lot of students in need, a lot of schools and school districts in need. That is what this bill is meant to address.

The underlying provisions of this bill, I believe, are very good and receiving wide bipartisan support for good reason. It does retain targeting for the most disadvantaged students throughout the country. It increases resources in key programs. It does consolidate a lot of the programs that exist at the Federal level, but consolidates it with added flexibility to local school districts.

It has an emphasis on early childhood reading programs. It recognizes the importance of professional development programs for our teachers, but also an area that is of particular concern for me, professional development of the leadership of our schools, principals and superintendents.

It recognizes the need for research-based education programming and the important role that technology brings in educating our children today. It also contains measurements, measurements which will hopefully be used for diagnostic purposes with enough remediation resources in order to lift students who are underperforming in our school districts, rather than as a means to just punish schools and our students.

But there is still work that needs to be done. There are some glaring absences in this education bill, not least of which is pre-K education programming. There was an excellent study that came out of the University of Wisconsin just a couple of weeks ago that was published in the Journal of American Medical Association that I would reference my colleagues to, talking about the advantages and the benefits of a good focused pre-K education program. We also need to do a better job and a more efficient job of the education research programs that exist right now.

But perhaps the most glaring weakness of the bill is that we are not living up to our responsibility for special education funding in this country. The

gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY) and I offered an amendment to get the Federal Government to live up to our 40 percent responsibility of special education funding for local school districts. That amendment was not made in order.

We hope to be able to work as the appropriation process moves forward this year in getting enough of our colleagues to recognize the importance of the Federal Government to live up to our cost share for special education expenses.

If we can do one thing that will free up more resources, increase flexibility to local school districts, it is for us to live up to that 40 percent cost share rather than the slightly less than 15 percent that we currently have today. So we have more work to do this year, but H.R. 1 is a good start.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. FLETCHER), a member of the committee.

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this very important subject. I think we all would probably agree that the education of our children is one of our greatest responsibilities.

Let me say thanks to the gentleman from Ohio (Chairman BOEHNER) for all of his work, an amazing accomplishment as we pass this bipartisan bill out of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Folks have said, well, it is not perfect. Of course it is not. But it is a very, very good product and a great step in the right direction. Does it please everyone? No, but I think it does an outstanding job to change the direction of education in this country, the first change we have had in probably about 30 years.

The President has established the principles, and I think this bill meets those principles. There are a few things that we might work on as we amend it to try to give students more choice. But right now, the focus that I think we need to look at, too, is particularly on the educational gap that we have in this country.

When I look at minorities and look at only 36 percent of minorities being able to read on grade level by the fourth grade, we have a problem, a serious problem, an unacceptable problem. I believe this legislation, this initiative by the President, will help address that problem, a problem that I would say has been largely ignored over the last several decades.

The gap has not decreased. We have not offered the kind of help in education to empower minorities in this country that we should. I think it is a reflection of some soft discrimination that lowers expectations, that we need to make sure that that is stopped and that we raise expectations, the accountability, the focus on literacy which is needed in this country greatly to make sure that the minorities close that gap.